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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DAILY CABLE

Thursday 16 November 1978

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NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION

Unauthorized Disclosure Subject to Criminal Sanctions

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National Intelligence Daily Cable for Thursday, 16
November.

The NID Cable
is for the purpose of informing senior US officials.

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CHINA-TIBET: United Front Campaign

[redacted] In a move designed to improve its image at home and abroad, China has arranged the release of 34 Tibetan prisoners. Peking's handling of the announcement indicates that the prisoner release is part of its

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"united front" campaign toward Taiwan as well as an attempt to reduce an irritant in China's relations with India.

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[redacted] //Peking announced that the released prisoners include 24 former political and religious leaders and 10 "secret agents."

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[redacted] In a version of China's announcement that was broadcast to Taiwan, the Chinese stressed that the Tibetans have had their "citizens' rights" restored and that they will be assisted in leaving China if they choose to do so. The last similar release of prisoners was in 1975-76, when Nationalist Chinese officials and "agents" were released and permitted to go abroad. Peking also announced that Tibetans in exile can return home without fear of reprisals.

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[redacted] China appears to be propagandizing the prisoner release for several purposes. Peking may hope to undercut the Dalai Lama and his supporters in India and at the same time help smooth the way for improvements in relations with New Delhi.

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[redacted] The Chinese undoubtedly also want to use the prisoner release to lend credibility to the nonmilitary "united front" tactics they have emphasized recently in statements concerning Taiwan. The Chinese may see this act as a means of easing concern in the US about China's intentions toward Taiwan. The Chinese may also hope to improve their "human rights" image in the US--news of the prisoner release was carried in English.

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[redacted] Domestically, the release of the Tibetans will almost certainly be used to reinforce recent expressions by Peking of its support for the interests of the five minority nationalities within China's borders. The regime has trumpeted its "liberalized" policies in dealing with the nationalities since the ouster in 1976 of the radicals from the Peking leadership.

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Belgium

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[REDACTED] Belgian Prime Minister Vanden Boeynants dissolved the parliament of his three-week old interim government yesterday. The stage is now set for an election on 17 December to form a government whose major task will be to revise the constitution to give greater autonomy to the Flemish- and French-speaking communities.

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[REDACTED] The formal opening of the campaign will probably be marked by an announcement of a three-party francophone front, featuring a strong defense of French-speakers' interests in any plan to federalize Belgium. A counterpart Flemish front has not been announced, but several parties have adopted strong positions to cut back privileges for French-speakers, particularly residents of outlying Brussels suburbs located in Flemish territory.

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[REDACTED] The traditional mistrust between Belgium's French and Flemish speakers is intensifying, and the campaign will probably lead to prolonged and heated debates. Decisions on economic and defense questions will probably not come up for several more months due to the government's continued preoccupation with the devolution issue. [REDACTED]

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